

Pre-Adamites, Politics and Criticism:  
Isaac La Peyrère's Contribution to Modern Biblical Studies

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Isaac La Peyrère is probably not the first name biblical scholars think of when writing about the origins of modern biblical criticism. However, Julius Wellhausen, the so-called “father” of the Documentary Hypothesis, associated biblical criticism’s origins with La Peyrère, whose Latinized name he knew as Peyrerius.<sup>1</sup> Following Wellhausen, the great Hermann Strack likewise maintained La Peyrère’s central place in the history of Pentateuchal studies and the rise of historical critical inquiry.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Walter Moberly has brought attention to La Peyrère’s pioneering efforts in the exegesis of the book of Genesis.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in his survey of the critical study of the Old Testament, Moshe Goshen-Gottstein identifies La Peyrère, along with Baruch Spinoza and Richard Simon, as marking a turning point in the history of biblical exegesis and it is from this period that a new type of biblical criticism emerged.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to biblical exegesis, La Peyrère is also associated with early anthropological and evolutionary theories for propagating the idea that human origins predated the biblical Adam. Umberto Eco, author of *The Name of the Rose*, devotes a short essay to La Peyrère’s “pre-Adamites” in a recent volume.<sup>5</sup> Although La Peyrère’s work considering pre-Adamites is significant for anthropological and geographical studies, it is also essential for tracing the birth and development of modern biblical criticism.

The present article is segmented into three major parts. The first part situates La Peyrère’s life and work within its social and historical context. The second portion is taken up with an analysis of La Peyrère’s hermeneutical program, including a detailed analysis of specific instances of La Peyrère’s biblical exegesis. The third and final section places La Peyrère’s biblical project within the more specific cultural and political context that such a program served: primarily the political desires of the Prince of Condé, for whom La Peyrère served as secretary and diplomat. This

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel, with a reprint of the article Israel from the Encyclopedia Britannica* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1878), 6. His comments here pertain specifically to the study of the Pentateuch, and significantly, Wellhausen lists Spinoza along with La Peyrère in this regard.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann L. Strack, “The Higher Criticism, a Witness to the Credibility of the Biblical Narrative,” *Hebraica* 1, no. 1 (1884): 5. In this spirited defense of the historical critical method, Strack lists Hobbes before La Peyrère because Hobbes’ work was published before La Peyrère’s. La Peyrère’s, however, was prior to Hobbes’, and was already circulating in unpublished form, and subject to numerous published refutations, well before Hobbes began work on his more famous *Leviathan*.

<sup>3</sup> R.W.L. Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 26-27.

<sup>4</sup> M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, “The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: Rise, Decline, Rebirth,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102, no. 3 (1983): 376. Patrick Lambe makes a sharp dichotomy between what he calls “critics” and “skeptics” within the seventeenth century, placing La Peyrère squarely on the side of the skeptics, in Patrick J. Lambe, “Critics and Skeptics in the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Letters,” *Harvard Theological Review* 81, no. 3 (1988): 272-292. Goshen-Gottstein is aware of La Peyrère skeptical attitude, but still places him in an important position within the broader history of modern biblical criticism.

<sup>5</sup> Umberto Eco, *Turning Back the Clock: Hot Wars and Media Populism* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), 263-265. The essay is entitled, “What Are We to Do with the Pre-Adamites?” and originally appeared in 2003.

article aims at highlighting La Peyrère's central place in the history of modern biblical interpretation, and specifically his important contributions to the development of Pentateuchal criticism, underscoring the political commitment that became the very *raison d'être* of his textual analyses and the methods he forged. La Peyrère influenced the future of modern biblical criticism especially through his influence on his friend Richard Simon, who would become known as one of the fathers of the historical critical method.

*Bordeaux and Beyond: La Peyrère's Place in the Seventeenth Century*

No one is absolutely certain as to the date of Isaac La Peyrère's birth, nor for that matter his family's historical origin, but Richard Popkin, the modern scholar who has done the most work on La Peyrère, argues for the likely birth date 1596. We have much more reliable knowledge about his immediate family and place of birth, Bordeaux, France. His family was wealthy and Huguenot, living in a region of southern France where it was not uncommon for Protestant families to be descendants of Marranos, Jewish converts to Christianity from the Iberian Peninsula. This fact, coupled with La Peyrère's Marrano-like theology and Marrano-sounding name (Pereira was known to be a Marrano name), have led many like Popkin to speculate that he was in fact of Marrano heritage. La Peyrère's family was in business with the Prince of Condé, and beginning in 1640, La Peyrère entered the Prince's service as his personal secretary. Through this service La Peyrère became a member of the elite intellectual circle that included such important seventeenth century thinkers as Hugo Grotius, Pierre Gassendi, Gabriel Naudé, and Blaise Pascal.<sup>6</sup>

La Peyrère's service to the Prince of Condé as secretary and diplomat thrust him into the middle of the complex post-Treaty of Westphalia (1648) seventeenth century politics. After the death of Henry II de Bourbon (1646), the Prince of Condé, La Peyrère remained in the service of his successor Louis II de Bourbon, although that appointment was not made until 1647. La Peyrère not only served Louis II de Bourbon, the new Prince of Condé, as his secretary, but also functioned as an important diplomat, travelling throughout Europe, including the Dutch Republic and England. As Condé's diplomat secretary La Peyrère befriended Queen Christina of Sweden, René Descartes's patroness. Queen Christina, who abdicated her throne in 1654 and converted to

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<sup>6</sup> Frédéric Gabriel, "Periegesis and Skepticism: La Peyrère, Geographer," in *Skepticism in the Modern Age: Building on the Work of Richard Popkin*, ed. José R. Maia Neto, Gianni Paganini, and John Christian Laursen, 159-170 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 160-163; H.J.M. Nellen, "Growing Tension between Church Doctrines and Critical Exegesis of the Old Testament," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation Vol. II: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Magne Sæbø, 802-826 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 818; Nathan Wachtel, "Théologies marranes: Une configuration millénariste," *Annales. Histoire, Science sociales* 62, no. 1 (2007): 69-100; Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 221 and 362 n. 70; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676): His Life, Work and Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 5-6, 17, 21-25, 95-96, 177 n. 1 and 183 n. 106; Idem, "The Marrano Theology of Isaac La Peyrère," *Studi internazionali di filosofia* 5 (1973): 97-126; Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics Vol. 1: The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 81-82; Ira Robinson, "Isaac de la Peyrère and the Recall of the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 40 (1978): 117-130; Jean-Pierre Oddos, "Recherches sur la vie et l'oeuvre d'Isaac de La Peyrère (1596?-1676)," (Ph.D. diss., Grenoble University, 1974), 49; Miriam Yardeni, "La religion de La Peyrère et 'Le Rappel des Juifs,'" *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse* 51 (1971): 245-259; Max Markreich, "Notes on Transformation of Place Names by European Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 23, no. 4 (1961): 273 and 273 n. 74; Hans-Joachim Schoeps, "Philosemitism in the Baroque Period," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 47, no. 2 (1956): 141; and David Rice McKee, "Isaac de La Peyrère, A Precursor of Eighteenth-Century Critical Deists," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 59, no. 2 (1944): 456.

Catholicism in 1655, supported La Peyrère as his patroness, specifically in the completion of his infamous *Prae-Adamitae*.<sup>7</sup>

La Peyrère wrote a number of very influential works that at first glance may seem unrelated. I argue, however, that on closer inspection these texts are intimately connected with one another. His manuscripts concerned such topics as the geography of Iceland (*Relation de l'Islande*) and Greenland (*Relation du Groenland*) as well as speculations concerning human origins and the existence of humans before the biblical Adam (*Prae-Adamitae* and *Systema Theologicum*), and also included a messianic speculation about the return of Jews to the Holy Land (*Du Rappel des Juifs*). As we shall see, all of these works had implications for his biblical hermeneutic, spelled out most explicitly in his *Prae-Adamitae* (including *Systema Theologicum*, which was usually bound together in one volume), which was inextricably tied to his contemporary political concerns.<sup>8</sup>

La Peyrère was arrested on account of the publication of *Prae-Adamitae*, and he followed Christina of Sweden's lead the year before by converting to Catholicism, in response to the advice he received to enter therein. After his conversion, he penned a formal recantation of his views to Pope Alexander VII, before whom he appeared in person. Pope Alexander asked La Peyrère to consider remaining in Rome, but he refused the Pope's offer, and instead returned to Paris. In Paris, he continued working for the Prince of Condé, but no longer functioned as the Prince's secretary, and served rather as the Prince's librarian, from which service he eventually retired in 1665, at the age of sixty-nine. We do not know what became of his wife or any children. After his retirement, he joined the French Oratorians as a lay member. From the time of his retirement until his death in 1676, he resided with the Oratorians in their Oratory at the seminary Notre Dame des Vertus in Aubervilliers, just outside of Paris. Although retired, he continued to receive his pension from his service as Condé's librarian. La Peyrère's move in joining the Oratorians is highly significant because it facilitated La Peyrère's method of interpretation spreading as modern biblical entered the eighteenth century. The primary reason

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<sup>7</sup> Thijs Weststeijn, "Spinoza sinicus: An Asian Paragraph in the History of the Radical Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 4 (2007): 543; Élisabeth Quennehen, "«L'auteur des Præadamites», Isaac Lapeyrère. Essai biographique," in *Dissidents, excentriques et marginaux de l'Âge classique: Autour de Cyrano de Bergerac: Bouquet offert à Madeleine Alcover*, ed. Patricia Harry, Alain Mothu, and Philippe Sellier, 349-373 (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2006), 363; Esther Starobinski-Safran, "Raison et conflits de traditions," in *L'Europe et les Juifs*, ed. Esther Benbassa and Pierre Gisel, 95-128 (Geneva: Éditions Labor et Fides, 2002), 97; David N. Livingstone, "The Preadamite Theory and the Marriage of Science and Religion," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 82, no. 3 (1992): 6; Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle: The Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 25-26, 32, 186 and 204; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 12-14 and 180 n. 50.

<sup>8</sup> David N. Livingstone, "Cultural Politics and the Racial Cartographics of Human Origins," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35 (2010): 207; Idem, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 27-31; Idem, "Geographical Inquiry, Rational Religion, and Moral Philosophy: Enlightenment Discourses on the Human Condition," in *Geography and Enlightenment*, ed. David N. Livingstone and Charles W.J. Withers, 93-119 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 95-96 and 99-102; Idem, "Geography, Tradition and the Scientific Revolution: An Interpretative Essay," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 15, no. 3 (1990): 365; Gabriel, "Periegesis and Skepticism," 160, 163-164 and 170; Philip C. Almond, *Adam & Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 52-54; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 6, 10, 12 and 178 n. 20.

for this was because it was at Notre Dame des Vertus that La Peyrère became the close friend of the Oratorian priest Richard Simon.<sup>9</sup>

*A Pioneer of Modern Biblical Criticism: A Critical Examination of La Peyrère's Exegesis*

What makes La Peyrère's work so important for our discussion is how he built upon the work of others, ultimately forging a path that later biblical critics would follow as they embarked on the project of modern biblical criticism.<sup>10</sup> La Peyrère is one of the first and most significant intellectuals since the medieval period to call into question the entire Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; and few thinkers before the eighteenth century, did so with as many textual arguments as La Peyrère. Previously, some Jewish and Christian scholars had implied that certain passages in the Pentateuch appeared post-Mosaic, and they raised questions about particular passages that seemed to point beyond Moses to a later author. Some theologians raised questions that they then answered in defense of Mosaic authorship. In rarer instances, some theologians posited a later editor of Moses' works, like Ezra. But it was not until the second part of La Peyrère's *Prae-Adamitae* (his *Systema Theologicum*), the composition of which should be dated no later than 1648, that any non-Muslim scholars argued so forcefully against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a whole.

As Wellhausen noted above, centuries of scholarship would build upon this foundation, driving the development of source criticism into the twentieth century and beyond. This denial of Mosaic authorship became the backbone of La Peyrère's biblical criticism, but he utilized a host of other resources to aid in his exegetical program as well. La Peyrère's famous geographical investigations were integral to his biblical hermeneutic, and he utilized his studies to help show errors in the biblical texts, just as he found inconsistencies internal to the texts themselves. For La Peyrère, "The Bible... comprised a set of culturally specific books aimed at local audiences, and could not be treated as a seamless, transhistorical object."<sup>11</sup> Finally, what drove his biblical

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<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey L. Morrow, "French Apocalyptic Messianism: Isaac La Peyrère and Political Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 27, no. 2 (2011): 204-205; Quennehen, "L'auteur des *Préadamites*," 350-351, 351 n. 10, 364, 367-370 and 373; David Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère and His *Pre-Adamites*," in *Dissidents*, ed. Harry, Mothu, and Sellier, 380 n. 26 and 381; Willem van Asselt, "Adam en Eva als Laatkomers. De pre-adamitische speculaties van Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676)," in *Adam en Eva in het paradijs. Actuele visies op man en vrouw uit 2000 jaar christelijke theologie*, ed. Harm Goris and Susanne Hennecke, 99-115 (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2005), 101; Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 25-26; Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 14-15, 17-18 and 20; and McKee, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 459. On the importance of La Peyrère's biblical exegesis in the history of modern biblical criticism, see Morrow, "French Apocalyptic Messianism," 203-213; Idem, "The Modernist Crisis and the Shifting of Catholic Views on Biblical Inspiration," *Letter & Spirit* 6 (2010): 267-273; Idem, "The Politics of Biblical Interpretation: A 'Criticism of Criticism,'" *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1035 (2010): 528-545; Pierre Gibert, *L'invention critique de la Bible: XV<sup>e</sup> – XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2010); Heikki Räisänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma: Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faith* (London: SCM, 1997), 137-152; Anthony T. Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 204-213; Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 42-59; and Idem, "Bible Criticism and Social Science," in *Methodological and Historical Essays in the Natural and Social Sciences*, ed. Robert S. Cohen and Marx W. Wartofsky, 339-360 (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1974), 339-360.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Legaspi describes well the path modern biblical criticism took from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries in "What Ever Happened to Historical Criticism?" *Journal of Religion & Society* 9 (2007): no. 10-11. See also Morrow, "Politics of Biblical Interpretation," 528-545; and Gibert, *L'invention critique*.

<sup>11</sup> William Poole, *The World Makers: Scientists of the Restoration and the Search for the Origins of the Earth* (Whitney: Peter Lang, 2010), 28.

interpretation was his unique messianic theology, which was as political as it was theological. It is to these hermeneutical edifices that we now turn.

*Moses and the Authorship of the Pentateuch: An Enduring Proposal*

La Peyrère denied, almost wholesale, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.<sup>12</sup> Although it is not entirely clear which portions of his *Prae-Adamitae* landed him in trouble, it is almost certainly on account of his denial of Mosaic authorship and pre-Adamite hypothesis, namely that human beings predated Adam. Although the denial of the Mosaic authorship of most of the Pentateuch in Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) was published before La Peyrère was able to publish his own more thorough critique in *Prae-Adamitae* (including his *Systema Theologicum*, in which the critique is found, 1655), La Peyrère's text had already circulated throughout Europe long before. The first part, *Prae-Adamitae*, which he began work on around 1635, was circulated shortly after La Peyrère completed this section, by 1643.<sup>13</sup> In fact, well before either *Leviathan* or *Prae-Adamitae* was published, scores of intellectuals throughout Europe were publishing refutations (of which Hugo Grotius' appears to be the first) of La Peyrère's unpublished manuscript.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Morrow, "French Apocalyptic Messianism," 205-206; Nellen, "Growing Tension," 822; Eric Jorink, "'Horrible and Blasphemous': Isaac La Peyrère, Isaac Vossius and the Emergence of Radical Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Republic," in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700: Volume 1*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, 429-550 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 429; Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 376 and 379; van Asselt, "Adam en Eva," 106; Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 222-223; Idem, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 16-18, 32-34, 37, 159, 352 and 355; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 1-2, 48-49, 69, 71 and 78; and Starobinski-Safran, "Raison et conflits," 99-100.

<sup>13</sup> Élisabeth Quennehen, "Lapeyrère, la Chine et la chronologie biblique," *La Lettre clandestine* 9 (2000): 244. The earliest reference we have to this work is a letter from Gabriel Naudé to Cardinal Barberini 1642 (I am uncertain as to whether this reference, which I have taken from Quennehen, "Lapeyrère," 244 n. 6, is to Cardinal Antonio Barberini [1607-1671]—who would have been the Crown Cardinal Protector of the Kingdom of France in 1642, a friend of Cardinal Mazarin, and nephew to the then current Pope Urban VIII—or his older brother Cardinal Francesco Barberini [1597-1679]—who was also Urban VIII's nephew, was the Grand Inquisitor of the Holy Roman Inquisition at the time [1633-1679]). La Peyrère's claim is that his thought and research on the contents of *Prae-Adamitae* and *Systema Theologicum* go back at least to 1635. Two nearly identical early drafts exist, one at least from 1644. Finally, an autographed French copy by La Peyrère has also been discovered, entitled, *Traité confirmatif des Préadamites. Dissertation philosophique sur les Préadamites*, but the manuscript is not dated. See Quennehen, "Lapeyrère," 244 and 244 n. 7-8; Idem, "Un Nouveau Manuscrit des Préadamites," *La Lettre clandestine* 4 (1995); and Idem, "À Propos des Préadamites: deux manuscrits des Archives Nationales," *La Lettre clandestine* 3 (1994): 17-20.

<sup>14</sup> Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 379; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Hugo Grotius's Dissertation on the Origin of the American Peoples and the Use of Comparative Methods," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, no. 2 (1991): 238-240; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 6. On the complex issues involved in the composition of *Prae-Adamitae* and *Systema Theologicum*, see Gibert, *L'invention critique*, 85 n. 1; Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 392-394, 393 n. 31-32, 393-394 n. 33 and 394 n. 37; Quennehen, "Lapeyrère," 243-255; Idem, "Un Nouveau Manuscrit"; Idem, "À Propos," 17-20; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 42-43. What was published as *Prae-Adamitae* is actually composed of two separate works. The first is a brief text whose long title may be shortened to *Prae-Adamitae* (Pre-Adamites). The second text, over four times the size of the first, whose title might be shortened to *Systema theologicum* (Theological System). Although the earliest known reference that might provide a clue to the origin of La Peyrère's thought on this matter is 1642, Malcolm maintains that the reference need only refer to the first part, *Prae-Adamitae*, which, from further correspondence, Malcolm concedes was probably completed by 1643. Primarily based upon other later texts which the second work, *Systema theologicum* cites, Malcolm dates the completion of the entire bound work to around 1648. Popkin believed that La Peyrère revised *Prae-Adamitae* quite frequently during 1641-1643 (*Isaac La Peyrère*, 6).

We cannot be sure as to how much of La Peyrère's completed work was in circulation before its publication in 1655. Noel Malcolm believes that only the first part of the work, which does not contain any explicit question of Mosaic authorship, was available, and that the second much longer portion, *Systema Theologicum*, was only completed by 1648.<sup>15</sup> La Peyrère's text was certainly complete by 1648, and it seems likely that the general idea of the majority of the second part was already present, even if only in inchoate form. This certainly was the case with his *Du Rappel des Juifs*, which was based on ideas he incorporated in *Prae-Adamitae* and was published much earlier.

The idea that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, although usually assumed before La Peyrère's time, was not always viewed as essential within Jewish and Christian traditions.<sup>16</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, and well into the eighteenth century, the concept of Mosaic authorship became a much contested issue that held an important position within the theological and philosophical debates, as can be gauged in the work of scholars and philosophers as diverse as Spinoza and Voltaire, on the one hand, and Jean Astruc and Johann David Michaelis, on the other. The issue of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch became viewed as the necessary attribute safeguarding the notion of the Bible's divine inspiration.<sup>17</sup>

#### *A Brief History of Pentateuchal Source Criticism and the Denial of Mosaic Authorship*

The contestation over the authorship of the Pentateuch and challenges to Moses' revelation at Sinai date back to the proto-Gnostic Nasarenes, just before the onset of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> In the third century, the anti-Christian Roman philosopher Porphyry likewise challenged the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, as well as the revelation at Sinai.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Hazm's eleventh century manuscript *Al-Fasl fi-l-Milal wa-l-Ahwā wa-l-Nihal* is arguably the most significant philological and textual analysis that calls into question the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.<sup>20</sup>

The twelfth century Jewish luminary Ibn Ezra was the most famous medieval biblical commentator to call into question, at least obliquely, the Mosaic authorship of fragments of the

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<sup>15</sup> Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 392-394.

<sup>16</sup> Jon D. Levenson, "The Eighth Principle of Judaism and the Literary Simultaneity of Scripture," *Journal of Religion* 68, no. 2 (1988): 205-225.

<sup>17</sup> Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 137-140; Gibert, *L'invention critique*, 111-113 and 169; James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture Then and Now* (New York: Free, 2007), 29-30; Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 195-197; Idem, "Spinoza and Bible Scholarship," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Don Garrett, 383-407 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 388; Idem, *Third Force*, 16-19; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 50 and 70-74; and Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 383-386.

<sup>18</sup> Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 60.

<sup>19</sup> Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 400; and Aryeh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 30.

<sup>20</sup> Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Polemics against Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 1 (1996): 61; Idem, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 41-47, 50, 67 n. 52 and 67-69; R. David Freedman, "The Father of Modern Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 19 (1989): 31-38; and David S. Powers, "Reading/Misreading One Another's Scriptures: Ibn Ḥazm's Refutation of Ibn Nagrella al-Yahū d ī," in *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions: Papers Presented at the Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies*, ed. William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks, 109-121 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 109-121.

Torah.<sup>21</sup> In the fifteenth century, Alfonso Tostado Ribera de Madrigal, who became the bishop of Avila in Spain, wrote a number of questions some had allegedly leveled against the Mosaic authorship of certain Pentateuchal passages, questions to which he then responded in defense of the more traditional view. In the sixteenth century, Andreas Rudolph Bodenstein von Karlstadt affirmed that certain portions of the Pentateuch did not date from Moses, and, in the same century, Andreas Masius connected much of the Old Testament with Ezra, although Masius was more cautious when he described the Pentateuch's origins. Cornelius à Lapide and Jacques Bonfrère bring us into the seventeenth century, and although Lapide supposed Joshua was responsible for at least some of the Pentateuchal redaction, and Bonfrère was well aware of problems with Mosaic authorship that had been brought up by theologians and biblical commentators in the past, both maintained the core Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

By the end of the seventeenth century, with Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), Baruch Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* (1670) and Richard Simon's *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (1678), the denial of Mosaic authorship was becoming more common among critical scholars, although the issue remained controversial on the whole.<sup>23</sup> In the eighteenth century, by contrast, a number of the central figures involved in the development of modern biblical criticism, responded to these earlier seventeenth century figures by defending the Pentateuch's Mosaic authorship. This is the case especially for Jean Astruc whose book in defense of Mosaic authorship, *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il paroît que Moïse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse* (1753), proved foundational in the development of the later Documentary Hypothesis which triumphed at the end of the nineteenth century and dawn of the twentieth.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Uriel Simon, "Abraham Ibn Ezra," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation Vol. 1/2: The Middle Ages*, ed. Magne Sæbø, 377-387 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 382-383; Levenson, "Eighth Principle," 209-210; and Nahum M. Sarna, "The Modern Study of the Bible in the Framework of Jewish Studies," *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1983): 22. Though see James Kugel's important caveat (*How to Read the Bible*, 30-31).

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 404-410.

<sup>23</sup> John W. Rogerson, "Early Old Testament Critics in the Roman Catholic Church—Focusing on the Pentateuch," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament II*, ed. Sæbø, 839-840; Richard H. Popkin, "Spinoza and Bible Scholarship," in *The Books of Nature and Scripture: Recent Essays on Natural Philosophy, Theology, and Biblical Criticism in the Netherlands of Spinoza's Time and the British Isles of Newton's Time*, ed. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin, 1-20 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 1-20; Michel Malherbe, "Hobbes et la Bible," in *Le Grand Siècle et la Bible*, ed. Jean-Robert Armogathe, 691-699 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989), 691-699; and Arrigo Pacchi, "Hobbes and Biblical Philology in the Service of the State," *Topoi* 7 (1988): 231-239. On the changing views concerning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, especially from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth, see Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 383-386. On Hobbes' and Spinoza's important role in this history, see Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Leviathan and the Swallowing of Scripture: The Politics behind Thomas Hobbes' Early Modern Biblical Criticism," *Christianity & Literature* 61, no. 1 (2011): 33-54; Idem, "The Bible in Captivity: Hobbes, Spinoza and the Politics of Defining Religion," *Pro Ecclesia* 19, no. 3 (2010): 291-299; and Idem, "The Early Modern Political Context to Spinoza's Bible Criticism," *Revista de Filosofia* 66, no. 3 (2010): 7-24. On La Peyrère's relationship with Spinoza, see especially Richard H. Popkin, "Spinoza and La Peyrère," *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1977): 172-195.

<sup>24</sup> Jean Astruc, *Conjectures sur la Genèse*, ed. Pierre Gibert (Paris: Éditions Noësis, 1753), 123, 140, 315, 433, 489, 495 and 513-515; Rogerson, "Early Old Testament," 846-847; Rudolf Smend, *From Astruc to Zimmerli* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 1-14; Idem, "Jean Astruc: A Physician as a Biblical Scholar," in *Sacred Conjectures: The Context and Legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc*, ed. John Jarick, 157-173 (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 157-173; Pierre Gibert, "De l'intuition à l'évidence: La multiplicité documentaire dans la Genèse chez H. B. Witter et

Simon's criticisms which carried biblical scholarship further than his predecessors had been an apologetic response to his contemporaries like La Peyrère, Hobbes and Spinoza, and so it should come as no surprise that Johann David Michaelis, another eighteenth century defender of Mosaic authorship, likewise would carry biblical scholarship further by reacting to Astruc's *Conjectures*, which, although Astruc defended Mosaic authorship, Michaelis saw as a threat to the authenticity of Genesis.<sup>25</sup> And it was with Michaelis' student, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn that we see the challenge to Mosaic authorship begin to build upon the critical assessments which preceded him and develop into source critical theories like those more generally accepted by scholars today.<sup>26</sup>

#### *La Peyrère's Place in the History of Source Criticism on the Question of Mosaic Authorship*

Unlike many of the figures that worked on these questions in the previous centuries and afterward, La Peyrère was not known for his philological abilities. In fact, Richard Simon, who knew La Peyrère personally, claimed La Peyrère knew no Hebrew or Greek. The evidence does indicate, however, that La Peyrère did at least know Greek, technical details of which he discussed in his published works. He may also have had a very rudimentary understanding of Hebrew, although this is less certain than his knowledge of Greek. The evidence for these language abilities is indicated from autographed unpublished letters.<sup>27</sup>

Malcolm summarizes La Peyrère's arguments against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as follows: (1) the mention of "Transjordan" in Deuteronomy 1:1; (2) the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34; (3) the mention of a new location for the "iron bed" in Deuteronomy 3:11; (4) the phrase "unto this day" throughout Deuteronomy, especially Deuteronomy 34:6; perhaps (5) the apparently anachronistic phrase "as Israel did" in Deuteronomy 2:12; and (6) the mention of the text "book of wars of the Lord" in Numbers 21:14.<sup>28</sup>

La Peyrère argues against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch on account of all sorts of errors, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the texts, in the first chapter of the fourth book of his *Systema Theologicum*. He begins his analysis on the Pentateuch's authorship by bringing up the question about whether or not the Old Testament texts are the originals, and concludes that they are not. He thinks it is self evident, e.g., that the Books of Joshua, Chronicles and Kings are "copies" and not originals.<sup>29</sup> He explains:

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Jean Astruc," in *Sacred Conjectures*, ed. Jarick, 174-189; and Aulikki Nahkola, "The *Memoires* of Moses and the Genesis of Method in Biblical Criticism: Astruc's Contribution," in *Sacred Conjectures*, ed. Jarick, 204-220.

<sup>25</sup> Legaspi, *Death of Scripture*, 136-140; and Smend, *From Astruc*, 30-42.

<sup>26</sup> Legaspi, *Death of Scripture*, 136, 156, 165 and 194 no. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Nellen, "Growing Tension," 818; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 18 and 42.

<sup>28</sup> Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 412; Isaac La Peyrère, *Præ-Adamitæ. Sive Exercitatio super Versibus duodecimo, decimotertio, & decimoquarto, capituli quinti Epistolæ D. Pauli ad Romanos. Quibus Inducuntur Primi Homines ante Adamum conditi* (n.p., 1655); and Idem, *Systema Theologicum, ex Præ-Adamitarum Hypothesi. Pars Prima* (n.p., 1655). All English translations taken from Isaac La Peyrère, *Men before Adam. Or a Discourse upon the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth Verses of the Fifth Chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans. By which are prov'd, That the first Men were created before Adam* (London: n.p., 1656); and Idem, *A Theological Systeme Upon that Presupposition, That Men were before Adam. The first Part* (London: n.p., 1655). La Peyrère originally published these works anonymously.

<sup>29</sup> La Peyrère, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.197-198; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.204.

And nothing more frequent in other books, *Behold they are written in the books of Nathan, or in the books of Gad, or in the books of the remembrances of the Kings of Israel, and the Kings of Judah: or in the words of Jehu, the son of Hanani; or in the words of Hosea the Prophet, or in the Prophet Isay*, every one of them having their own History, to which it had relation, now lost. Whatsoever is read in the *Kings*, or *Chronicles*, are gather'd out of the books of *Nathan, Gad, Jehu, Hosea, Isay, &c.* Whence they are taken and gather'd, as is found by the confession of the authors who wrote them.<sup>30</sup>

La Peyrère immediately follows this by diving into his critique of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He begins by admitting ignorance about why anyone would think Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and is quick to mention that not everyone believes Moses to be the author. He then introduces his list of arguments by explaining that these points will illustrate the reasons why he is convinced these texts are not Moses' originals, but rather "copies."<sup>31</sup>

First, La Peyrère considers the death of Moses in Deuteronomy. He writes: "*Moses* is there read to have died. For how could *Moses* write after his death? They say that *Josuah* added the death of *Moses* to *Deuteronomie*. But, who added the death of *Josuah* to that book which is so call'd; and which, being written by *Josuah* himself, is reckon'd in *Moses* his Pentateuch?"<sup>32</sup> Thus La Peyrère not only calls into question the Mosaic authorship of that section of the Pentateuch, but he even consider specious the argument, employed by many including Lapede, that Joshua wrote that portion. No, for La Peyrère, this text must be dated much later than that, as he will make clear in his later arguments. The second argument La Peyrère employs has to do with distinguishing the side of the Jordan Moses spoke on, and the narrator's refrain "beyond the Jordan":

Besides, we read in the I. Cha. Of Deut. These are the words which Moses spake beyond Jordan. Which if Moses had spoken, he had said, on this side Jordan. For Moses had not pass'd Jordan; nay he never pass'd it: but he that writes Deuteronomy, sayes beyond Jordan, because it was in the holy Land, and because that place in the plains of Moab, where Moses last spoke to the Israelites, was beyond Jordan.<sup>33</sup>

La Peyrère's third argument pertains to the citation of the Book of the Wars of the Lord. La Peyrère asks how Moses could possibly cite this text, which allegedly was a book about the very events in which Moses played a part:

There is also a passage cited out of a Book, whose Title was, *The Warrs of the Lord*. The words in *Numbers* are these. *Whence it is said in the book of the warrs of the Lord. As he did in the red sea, so shall he do in the brooks of Arnon*. But that Book of the Wars of the Lord could not be cited by *Moses*, in which there could be mention made of those things which were done at *Arnon*, in the very place where *Moses* perform'd this exploit.<sup>34</sup>

It is here that La Peyrère explains his view of the general history of the Pentateuch's composition. He concedes a role to Moses, but like many later critics afterward, he believes the original words of Moses have been corrupted and added to over the years:

<sup>30</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.198; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.204.

<sup>31</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.198; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.204-205.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.198; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.205.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.198; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.205.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.198-199; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.205-206.

*Truly I believe that Moses made a Diarie [diurnos commentarios] of all those wonderfull things which God did for the people of Israel, under the conduct of Moses. From which collections the books of wars the Lord might afterwards be taken; Which for that cause was neither the Original, nor the Original of the Original: but indeed a Copy from a Copy [apographum apographi].*<sup>35</sup>

His fourth argument gives a clue to La Peyrère's dating of the Pentateuch, which cannot go to Joshua's time, but rather was "written long after Moses":

That which we read in the third Chapter of *Deuteronomy* does manifest, that they are written long after *Moses*; *Jair the son of Manasses possessed all the Country of Argob, and it is call'd after his name, Basan Hanoth Jair, to this day* [usque in praesentem diem]. *Moses* could never have said *to this day*; For *Jair* scarcely had possession of his own Villages at that time, when *Moses* is brought in so speaking....<sup>36</sup>

Continuing with the same trajectory as in the above example, La Peyrère adds his fifth argument:

The like we read in the same *Deuteronomy*, in the same Chapter. *Only Og King of Basan was remaining of the race of the Giants. His iron bed is shown, which is at Rabbath of the children of Ammon.* For what needed *Moses* to have said to the Jews, that his bed was shown at *Rabbath* of the children of *Ammon*, that they might learn the bignesse of the Giant? Why, I say, needed he to send the Jews to another place to see the bed of the Giant, who had seen him in his own Land, and overcome him, and measur'd him as he lay along in the fields of *Basan*? It is a great deal more likely to think, that this Writer, to gain credit to what he wrote concerning the King and Giant *Og*, of whom he made mention, spake of his iron bed, as a testimony of the wonderfull spoils of that terrible Giant, which were not at that time to be seen at *Basan*, where *Og* lay, but in *Rabbath* of the children of *Ammon*, the succession of ages having changed the place.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, La Peyrère's sixth argument goes even farther in locating a date for the composition of the Pentateuch, at least for *Deuteronomy*. As with later scholars, La Peyrère dates the following portion of *Deuteronomy* to "long after David's time":

We read also in the 2. of *Deuteronomy*, *The Horraeans first dwelt in Seir: whom the children of Esau driving out, dwelt there, as Israel did in the Land of his possession, which the Lord gave him.* In these words it is said, That the *Idumeans*, who are the Sons of *Esau*, inhabited Mount *Seir*, driving out the Inhabitants of those Mountains, And that the Jews again inhabited this Mount *Seir*, and gain'd Mount *Seir* as a possession, driving out and destroying those *Idumeans*. Yet it is most certain, that the *Idumeans*, according to *Moses* himself, were not thrown out in his time, as it is in *Deuteronomy* in the same Chapter. *And the Lord said to me, saith Moses, You shall pass through the confines of your brethren the sons of Esau, who dwell in Seir, and they shall be afraid of you; Therefore take heed you move not against them, for I will not give you of their Land one foot; for I have given Mount Seir in possession to Esau.* Therefore *Idumea* was not given to the Jews in the dayes of *Moses*, but long time after, as *David* Prophecies, Psalm 108....And *David* made also good his prophecie, 1 *Chro.* chap. 18....Therefore in the time of *David*, and not of *Moses*, *Edom* became a land of possession to *Israel*....And hence it is gather'd, that these essayes of *Deuteronomie* were written long after *David's* time, a great while after *Moses*.<sup>38</sup>

For La Peyrère, this is sufficient evidence to prove that Moses had not authored the Pentateuch and that it actually dates from long after his era. As he explains, "I need not trouble the Reader

<sup>35</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.198-199; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.205-206.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.199; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.206.

<sup>37</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.199-200; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.206-207.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.200; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.207-208.

much further, to prove a thing in it self sufficiently evident, that the five first books of the Bible were not written by *Moses*, as is thought.”<sup>39</sup> This is La Peyrère’s explanation for all of the errors, contradictions, and other infelicities in the Pentateuch, as he writes, “Nor need any one wonder after this, when he reads many things confus’d and out of order, obscure, deficient, many things omitted and misplaced, when they shall consider with themselves that they are a heap of Copie confusedly taken.”<sup>40</sup>

La Peyrère then proceeds to list some of the errors and defects in the Pentateuch.<sup>41</sup> For example, he notes that, “The 20 Chapter of *Genesis*, of *Abrahams* sojourning with *Abimelech*, King of *Gerar*, is misplaced: For it is not likely that the King would lust after *Sarah*, who was an old woman, and with whom it left off to be according to the manner of women, and who was not capable of pleasure.”<sup>42</sup> His final conclusion is that the Pentateuch has multiple authors: “these things were diversly written, being taken out of several authors.”<sup>43</sup>

### *Creation Accounts and Textual Difficulties*

In addition to his denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, La Peyrère anticipated the conclusion of later biblical scholars with his claim that Genesis 1-2 represented two creation accounts.<sup>44</sup> This is, of course, commonplace in contemporary biblical scholarship. Ever since Hermann Hupfeld isolated the Priestly (P) Source in the Pentateuch (1853), biblical scholars have understood Genesis 1-2 to represent two different creation accounts from two different sources, Genesis 1 representing the later P account, and Genesis 2 representing an earlier Yahwist (J) account. Jean Astruc was the first to distinguish these two accounts (1753) based on the different names for God, but unlike his source critical successors like Johann Gottfried Eichhorn and Hupfeld, Astruc actually believed that Moses put the two sources together. Even before Astruc, Henning Bernhard Witter had divided Genesis 1-2 into two different creation accounts (in 1711) on other stylistic grounds, but he apparently was not followed by anyone.

Unlike these later critics, La Peyrère did not focus on sources behind these two accounts, but he did divide Genesis 1-2 into two different accounts of creation or, more precisely, La Peyrère saw these as two different creations described by a single author. Of course, La Peyrère did not attribute that authorship to Moses, nor, as we have seen, did he attribute the Pentateuch as a whole to a single author. La Peyrère argued that the accounts were distinct not so much on stylistic grounds as in regards to theological content. Whereas Genesis 2 described Adam’s creation, Genesis 1 depicted the creation of pre-Adamites. In other words, Genesis 1 detailed the original creation of Gentiles, whereas Genesis 2 represented the creation of Jews.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.200-201; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.208.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.201; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.208.

<sup>41</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.201-202; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.208-210.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.201; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.208-209.

<sup>43</sup> Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.1.202; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.1.209.

<sup>44</sup> Morrow, “French Apocalyptic Messianism,” 206; Wetsel, “Isaac de La Peyrère,” 379 n. 20; Idem, “‘Histoire de la Chine’: Pascal and the Challenge to Biblical Time,” *Journal of Religion* 69, no. 2 (1989): 205-206; Philip C. Almond, “Adam, Pre-Adamites, and Extra-Terrestrial Beings in Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Religious History* 30, no. 2 (2006): 166-168; Idem, *Adam & Eve*, 53; and Aulikki Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament: The Foundations of Method in Biblical Criticism* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 87 n. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Especially La Peyrère, *Systema Theologicum*, 2.10.137-141; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 2.10.112-117.

According to La Peyrère's, the Bible told the story of the Jewish people and primarily excluded the histories of the Gentiles, which could be found in other non-biblical historical sources. In the first part of his *Præ-Adamitæ*, La Peyrère expositors Romans 5:12-14 (chapter 15 also brings Hosea into the discussion), which he applies to Genesis 1-3 in order to describe human history in two distinct ways: Gentile history recounted in Genesis 1 and Jewish history recounted in Genesis 2-3. He begins by arguing that the sin Paul speaks of that came with the law was not referring to the law God gave Moses at Mt. Sinai, but rather the law God gave to Adam.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, the sin was imputed to all of humanity, even to the pre-Adamites, those humans descended from those created before Adam, because "that Law which was given to *Adam*, was given to all men; and in that minute when God spake to *Adam*, in delivering to him his Law, he spake likewise to all men," since Adam was "then the Governour and Protector of all men."<sup>47</sup> The central point for La Peyrère was that there were humans before Adam and that these were the ancestors of Gentiles. According to La Peyrère, this pre-Adamite hypothesis best explained Genesis, St. Paul's Christian theology, and the ancient non-biblical records and histories of other peoples.<sup>48</sup>

La Peyrère was not the first to develop a pre-Adamite hypothesis, as it existed for some time among both Muslim and Renaissance thinkers.<sup>49</sup> For La Peyrère it was the errors, contradictions, inconsistencies, misattributions of authorship, etc., in the biblical texts, which helped him defend his pre-Adamite theory and bolster his messianic speculations.<sup>50</sup> His goal, which would carry over to modern biblical criticism, was to separate the errors from the original biblical text.<sup>51</sup> La Peyrère explains his hermeneutical purpose thus:

<sup>46</sup> Idem, *Præ-Adamitæ*, 1-3, 10.5-12 and 27-28; Idem, *Men before Adam*, 1-3, 10.1-9 and 24-26; Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 1.1.66-67; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 1.1.2-3.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, *Men before Adam*, 3.7-8. See Ibid, 2-3, 7 and 19.3, 6-8, 16 and 46-47; Idem, *Præ-Adamitæ*, 2-3, 7 and 19.7, 9-11, 20 and 45-46; Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 1.1.65-68; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 1.1.2-5.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, *Præ-Adamitæ*, 8 and 26.21-25 and 58; Idem, *Men before Adam*, 8 and 26.18-22 and 60-61; Idem, *Systema Theologicum*, 61; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, F1. For comments on his overall theological scheme regarding sin, redemption and pre-Adamites, see Alain Schnapp, "The Pre-adamites: An Abortive Attempt to Invent Pre-history in the Seventeenth Century?" in *History of Scholarship: A Selection of Papers from the Seminar on the History of Scholarship Held Annually at the Warburg Institute*, ed. Christopher Ligota and Jean-Louis Quantin, 399-412 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 399-412; Jonathan Sheehan, "Sacred and Profane: Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century," *Past and Present* 192 (2006): 55-56; van Asselt, "Adam en Eva," 104-106; Starobinski-Safran, "Raison et conflits," 100; and Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 126-129. La Peyrère's pre-Adamite hypothesis was later used to justify slavery and racism. See Livingstone, "Cultural Politics," 208-209; Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 376-377; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 2, 4 and 146-165.

<sup>49</sup> Early Muslim versions of pre-Adamism existed, some apparently among Averroist sources. See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Intertwined Histories: *Crónica* and *Tārīkh* in the Sixteenth-Century Indian Ocean World," *History & Theory* 49, no. 4 (2010): 143-144; Almond, "Adam," 164-166; Ulrich Haarmann, "In Quest of the Spectacular: Noble and Learned Visitors to the Pyramids Around 1200 A.D.," in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, ed. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little, 57-68 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 65; Harrison, *'Religion'*, 222-223 n. 168; Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 26, 30-31, 185 n. 21; Idem, "The Pre-Adamite Theory in the Renaissance," in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Edward P. Mahoney, 50-69 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 52-53; and Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel Vol. I* (Stuttgart: A. Miersemann, 1957), 338-339. For more precursors to La Peyrère's pre-Adamite thesis, see Almond, "Adam," 164-166; Harrison, *'Religion'*, 222-223 n. 168; and Popkin, "Pre-Adamite Theory," 50-69.

<sup>50</sup> Morrow, "French Apocalyptic Messianism," 205-207; Nellen, "Growing Tension," 822; Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 380-381; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 44 and 48.

<sup>51</sup> Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 49.

The difficulty is, to know what are the words of the Copier, and which are the real words of the Original. And to speak the very truth, it is impossible to know all these things. Many things indeed there are, that if one take good heed, you shall find which are the Original, which the Copy. And if a hound who hunts after a wild beast where he sees most steps in the dust, according to his exquisite sent discerns them, and runs the track of the beast which he pursues.<sup>52</sup>

### *A Hermeneutical Revolution: The Use of Non-Biblical Historical Texts*

One of La Peyrère's most important and yet most overlooked contributions is the use of other non-biblical historical texts to understand biblical history and human origins.<sup>53</sup> La Peyrère had precursors here, especially Joseph Scaliger, but it is especially after La Peyrère's use of non-biblical historical sources that such use became increasingly accepted in discussions of human origins and human history.<sup>54</sup> The chronologies and historical accounts of other cultures, from China, the Americas, Africa, northern Europe, etc., played an immensely important role in La Peyrère's scheme and are one of the most enduring influences he had on the new biblical hermeneutic further developed by biblical scholars after him.<sup>55</sup> In his *Prae-Adamitae* La Peyrère writes that:

Moreover, from this Tenet, which asserts Men to have been before *Adam*, the History of *Genesis* appears much clearer, and agrees with itself. And it is wonderfully reconciled with all prophane Records whether ancient or new, to wit, those of the *Chaldeans, Egyptians, Scythians*, and

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<sup>52</sup> La Peyrère, *Systema Theologicum*, 4.2.203-204; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 4.2.212.

<sup>53</sup> Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors*, 35, 44 and 48-49; Nellen, "Growing Tension," 820; Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 376; van Asselt, "Adam en Eva," 108-109; Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 223 and 230; Idem, *Third Force*, 353; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 48 and 69-70; Idem, "The Development of Religious Scepticism and the Influence of Isaac La Peyrère's Pre-Adamism and Bible Criticism," in *Classical Influences on European Culture, AD 1500-1700*, ed. Robert Ralf Bolgar, 271-280 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 278-279; Quennehen, "Lapeyrère," 251-252; and Miguel Benítez, "La posterité de La Peyrère: *Dissertation sur l'origine des Nègres & des Américains*," in *La geografia dei saperi: Scritti in memoria di Dino Pastine*, ed. Domenico Ferraro and Gianna Gigliotti, 183-202 (Florence: La Lettere, 2000), 183-202.

<sup>54</sup> Zur Shalev, "Measurer of All Things: John Greaves (1602-1652), the Great Pyramid, and Early Modern Metrology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63, no. 4 (2002): 561. Isaac Vossius, Christina of Sweden's librarian, became famous for using the history of other peoples, especially in China, to call into question biblical authority, and he may have been influenced in this by La Peyrère whose work predates his own. See Weststeijn, "Spinoza sinicus," 537-561; and Susanna Åkerman, "The Answer to the Scepticism of Queen Christina's Academy (1656)," in *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Arjo Vanderjagt, 92-101 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 92-101. On Scaliger's work on non-biblical chronologies, and his influence on La Peyrère, see Gibert, *L'invention critique*, 71-73 and 99; and Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship I: Textual Criticism and Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), especially 134-226; Idem, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship II: Historical Chronology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Idem, "Joseph Scaliger and Historical Chronology: The Rise and Fall of a Discipline," *History and Theory* 14, no. 2 (1975): 156-185. La Peyrère explicitly cites Scaliger in *Systema Theologicum*, 3.7.180, 3.8.181, 4.9.232 and 4.13.244; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 3.7.177, 3.8.178, 4.9.256 and 4.13.275. But see Quennehen, "Lapeyrère," 243-255, on the challenges of assessing the accuracy of La Peyrère's use of Scaliger, and his sources in general, specifically regarding ancient non-biblical chronologies.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Titzmann, "Herausforderungen der biblischen Hermeneutik in der Frühen Neuzeit: Die neuen Diskurse der Wissenschaft und der Philosophie," in *Geschichte der Hermeneutik und die Methodik der textinterpretierenden Disziplinen*, ed. Jörg Schönert and Friedrich Vollhardt, 119-156 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 147-149 and 153-154.

*Chinensiens*; that most ancient Creation which is set down in the first of *Genesis* is reconciled to those of *Mexico*, not long ago discovered by *Columbus*.<sup>56</sup>

By including the histories of other peoples from across the globe, La Peyrère was both minimizing the exclusivity of the Bible's claims concerning human origins, as well as challenging the traditional interpretive authorities within Christian traditions. It was not the Church's tradition extended through time, nor the official Magisterium, nor even Scripture alone that held the key to understanding the history of the Bible, but rather other historical documents from other peoples.<sup>57</sup> Writing further La Peyrère explains the importance of using other historical texts:

But whatsoever we have learned in the knowledge of things, we owe to the Greeks, and to Latine Authors, who have written after them. But sayes he, all things among the Greeks are very late, and you shall find that the building of Towns, and the inventions of Arts, was immediately found out, and but a day old. And they last of all began to write Historie. But the *Egyptians* and *Phœnicians* had a constant record of things past, the Greeks themselves confesse. Those same Greeks, but very lately learned the use of Letters from the *Phœnicians*, being taught by *Cadmus*, who was himself a *Phœnician*....But the Greeks, that could scarce assert their own affaires for truth from the first Olympiad, nor could be sure of any thing that was before the first Olympiad: yet by hearing and reading, knew such things as came to their ears concerning the *Chaldæans*, *Egyptians*, *Scythians*, and *Phœnicians*, the most noble of Nations.<sup>58</sup>

It was through La Peyrère's pre-Adamite hypothesis and through his use of ancient non-biblical sources (especially chronologies) that La Peyrère became an important figure in the later discipline of anthropology, as it began to develop.<sup>59</sup> His geographical works on Iceland and Greenland are particularly important in this regard. The works of David Livingstone and Frédéric Gabriel have done much to shed light on how La Peyrère's geographical works fit into his larger hermeneutical framework.<sup>60</sup> Livingstone explains how, "by structuring the symbolic surface of map space, these cartographic images have the power to steer geographical imaginings into predetermined channels through naturalising, and thereby normalising, the identities they purport

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<sup>56</sup> La Peyrère, *Men before Adam*, 8.22; and Idem, *Præ-Adamitæ*, 8.24-25. See also his comments in *Systema Theologicum*, 3.5.165-171, 3.6.171-176 and 3.7.176-180; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 3.5.153-163, 3.6.164-170 and 3.7.171-177.

<sup>57</sup> Livingstone, "Cultural Politics," 207; Gabriel, "Periegesis and Skepticism," 159-170; and Quennehen, "Lapeyrère," 251-252.

<sup>58</sup> La Peyrère, *Systema Theologicum*, 3.6.172; and Idem, *Theological Systeme*, 3.6.165.

<sup>59</sup> David N. Livingstone, "Politics, Culture, and Human Origins: Geographies of Reading and Reputation in Nineteenth-Century Science," in *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*, ed. David N. Livingstone and Charles W.J. Withers, 178-202 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 180; Idem, "Preadamites: The History of an Idea from Heresy to Orthodoxy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1987): 41-66; and Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500-1700)* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1977), 535-566.

<sup>60</sup> Livingstone, "Politics, Culture, and Human Origins"; Idem, "Cultural Politics"; Idem, *Adam's Ancestors*; Idem, "Geographical Inquiry"; Idem, "Preadamite Theory"; Idem, "Geography"; Idem, "Preadamites"; and Gabriel, "Periegesis and Skepticism." David Allen Harvey fleshes out the broader context of the "ongoing intellectual confrontation between Catholics and freethinkers in the France of Louis XIV" (173), in which these debates figure. Harvey uses the example of the Baron de Lahontan, who also challenged the origin of all humanity from Adam, and the biblical record, as a window into this broader context. See David Allen Harvey, "The Noble Savage and the Savage Noble: Philosophy and Ethnography in the *Voyages* of the Baron de Lahontan," *French Colonial History* 11 (2010): 161-191.

to represent.”<sup>61</sup> This functions in a very specific way in La Peyrère’s work on Iceland and Greenland, and in his discussion on the origin of the Vikings therein.<sup>62</sup> La Peyrère’s friend François de La Mothe Le Vayer, who served as tutor to the young King Louis XIV, played a significant role in this context. It was La Mothe Le Vayer who desired the fabrication of travel accounts, even by intellectuals who never embarked on such travels, to convince readers of the world’s immense cultural diversity and use such diversity as a defense against traditional mores.<sup>63</sup> Both of La Peyrère’s *Relations (du Groenland and d’Islande)* were penned as letters to La Mothe Le Vayer, and, indeed, both fulfillments of Le Vayer’s political program.<sup>64</sup> As Gabriel explains:

...La Peyrère’s *Relations* use the Book of the world as a reservoir of (potentially) skeptical signs. These signs are in opposition to, for example, legends as well as biblical books....through the simple act of putting topics in relation to one another from a comparative perspective...La Peyrère goes in the direction of the *desiderata* of La Mothe le Vayer as well as in that of his own polygenic theses.<sup>65</sup>

### *Christian and Jewish Messiahs*

All of La Peyrère’s biblical exegesis, and even his entire hermeneutical program, served his unique messianic speculations, where he attempted to deconstruct the biblical text in order to reconstruct it to show what it “really means.” In fact, it is precisely those features of his hermeneutic that had the most lasting effect upon modern biblical criticism that he used for the purpose of supporting his nationalistic messianic vision of the King of France and the Messiah bringing the Jewish people back to the Holy Land.<sup>66</sup> Jesus was the first messiah who came for the Gentiles, and a second messiah would return in the future, coming this time for Jews.<sup>67</sup>

*Du Rappel des Juifs* is about Jews coming to France, which was regarded as a place of liberty because of the absence of slaves. The King of France would lead them with the messiah, and would return them to Holy Land.<sup>68</sup> Popkin does not think that La Peyrère’s vision was

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<sup>61</sup> Livingstone, “Cultural Politics,” 206.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 207.

<sup>63</sup> Gabriel, “Periegesis and Skepticism,” 160-163. As with La Peyrère and Scaliger before him, La Mothe Le Vayer was a staunch defender of utilizing non-biblical sources to understand the Bible, and the history behind the Bible. He devoured the non-biblical literature, especially from missionaries to Asia and the Americas, in order to demonstrate that Christian rituals were not unique to Christianity. See David Wetsel, “Biblicism and Historicity: The *Pensées* of Pascal and Christian Humanism,” *South Central Review* 2, no. 4 (1985): 12.

<sup>64</sup> Gabriel, “Periegesis and Skepticism,” 162-164.

<sup>65</sup> Gabriel, “Periegesis and Skepticism,” 170.

<sup>66</sup> Starobinski-Safran, “Raison et conflits,” 97-98 and 101-103; Alexandre Y. Haran, *Le lys et le globe: Messianisme dynastique et rêve impérial en France aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Seysse: Champ Vallon, 2000), 173-176; Fausto Parente, “Isaac de La Peyrère e Richard Simon: Osservazioni preliminari ad uno studio del Ms. Chantilly, Musée de Condé, n. 191 (698): *De Juifs Elus, Reietés, et Rapelés* di Isaac de La Peyrère,” in *La geografia dei saperi*, ed. Ferraro and Gliotti, 171-178; Popkin, *Third Force*, 66 and 353; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 3, 8, 44, 50, 52-54, 58-59 and 66; and Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 203.

<sup>67</sup> Fausto Parente, “Isaac de la Peyrère interprète de Paul: Pourquoi le *Rappel des Juifs* a-t-il été presque entièrement détruit au moment de sa publication?” *Revue des études juives* 167, no. 1-2 (2008): 169-186; Starobinski-Safran, “Raison et conflits,” 97-98 and 101-102; Haran, *Le lys et le globe*, 173-176; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 8.

<sup>68</sup> Nellen, “Growing Tension,” 819; Wetsel, “Isaac de La Peyrère,” 377; Richard H. Popkin, “Jewish-Christian Relations in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Conception of the Messiah,” *Jewish History* 6, no. ½ (1992): 165; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 54; Idem, “Development of Religious Scepticism,” 275-277; and Yardeni, “La religion,” 245-259.

apocalyptic nor that it involved any typically apocalyptic battle motifs, but rather Popkin sees it as completely peaceful. Popkin's comments notwithstanding, some of the language which La Peyrère employed elsewhere did indeed appear to imply some sort of apocalyptic battle, even if La Peyrère thought that such a battle might be close at hand. This is particularly evident in his letter, "To all the Synagogues to the Jews, dispersed over the face of the Earth," which was prefixed in English to the English translation of his *Prae-Adamitae*, and appended in Latin to the Latin text.<sup>69</sup> In it we read the following:

Nor shall God onely restore to you [Jews] your Kingdom by the Spirit of his Christ, your *Messias*, but there shall likewise arise from your bones, or he is already risen, a King and an Avenger, and shall restore you with a strong Hand, and a stretched out Arm, to your Country and Holy Land...My Bowels rejoyce as often as I call to minde this your King...My Heart leaps as often as I call to minde the most warlike Prince, and first-born of Kings, girding his Sword to his Thigh, drawing his shining Blade, pressing earnestly upon his and your Enemies, dipping his foot-steps in blood, and drinking off the River, triumphing and ascending up to the Mountain *Sion*, and there of the Nations vanquished, erecting Trophies before the Lord.<sup>70</sup>

The language in this passage is far more apocalyptic than Popkin concedes in his earlier writings, and seems to envision a real battle in which an apocalyptic king is an "Avenger" who restores the Jews "with a strong Hand," and who draws his sword, presses his enemies, and dips his footsteps in "blood." La Peyrère gives indications that he thinks these events will happen very soon:

I have spoken great things concerning you [Jews] in this Treatise; wherein I have handled your Election. Much greater are those which I shall speak in the next; where I shall handle your Restauration, which I certainly know shall be. And if God doth move here men's secret thoughts at all, I hope, and am confident, it shall be very shortly.<sup>71</sup>

### *The Three Kings of France and the Messiah: French Nationalism and La Peyrère's Political Biblical Interpretation*

The hermeneutic at work in La Peyrère's work, as well as the many specific instances of his biblical exegesis, cannot be separated from his political program, which they served. Throughout the various stages of his career, La Peyrère seemed to place different individuals in the position of King of France. At work in La Peyrère's oeuvre is a French nationalistic focus common to other French thinkers preceding and following him. Nor is his speculation over the role of the King of France a mere coincidence, but, as we shall see, is inextricably connected to his career as secretary and diplomat for the Prince of Condé, one of the most politically active men in the France of the time. In the end, after his arrest and conversion, La Peyrère's vision was tailored to meet the needs of the time for his own protection, but the basic contours of his vision remained the same: the Jewish Messiah would return to rescue the Jews from their plight across the globe, and eventually restore the Holy Land where the Messiah would rule the world in a universal messianic age alongside his royal steward.

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<sup>69</sup> "Synagogis Iudæorum Universis, Quotquot sunt per totum Terrarum orbem sparsæ."

<sup>70</sup> "To all the Synagogues to the Jews, dispersed over the face of the Earth."

<sup>71</sup> "To all the Synagogues," A4.

### *Gallican Politics*

In order to understand what appears to be La Peyrère's initial vision of the messianic royal steward, we need to mention briefly the role of Gallicanism and the church state conflict in Europe. The Conciliarist movement, which placed bishops and episcopal conferences above the authority of the pope, began with theological concerns regarding the relationship between papal authority and the authority of bishops. Conciliarism eventually transformed, especially in the modern period, into little more than a thin veil masking state politics. In states where secular rulers were responsible for the appointment of bishops, the call for a Council of bishops to trump the pope on theological matters was not far removed from the call for secular rulers to dominate the church.<sup>72</sup>

It was the France of the seventeenth century, particularly during the reign of King Louis XIV, that French Gallicanism became the paradigmatic form of Conciliarism and was solidified into a politically powerful opposition to papal claims of transnational authority.<sup>73</sup> In all its varied forms, however, Gallicanism represented a unique focus on the Catholic Church as it grew in French soil. French nationalism in its varied forms sprung in part from Gallican roots.

La Peyrère's French nationalistic messianic vision is firmly entrenched in this Gallican milieu. Cardinal Richelieu, and afterwards his successor Cardinal Mazarin, were the de facto rulers in military matters during the reigns of King Louis XIII and King Louis XIV's childhood reign, prior to his rise to the age of majority when Louis XIV became Europe's first absolute sovereign. La Peyrère initially tried to dedicate what became his *Du Rappel des Juifs* to Cardinal Richelieu. Richelieu was appalled and banned the text, barring it from publication. In 1643, the year after Richelieu died, La Peyrère promptly and anonymously published the work.<sup>74</sup>

It is possible that La Peyrère initially envisioned Louis XIV as the King of France. This of course is what most scholars have assumed, since, when La Peyrère wrote his work, Louis XIV was the King of France.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, in La Peyrère's undated dedication for his work on Iceland, *Relation de l'Islande*, Louis XIV is named fulfilling a similar role.<sup>76</sup> In La Peyrère's messianic vision, *Du Rappel des Juifs*, however, it does *not* appear to be Louis XIV who will be the universal King of France, rather someone else is wearing the French crown. In this *Du Rappel des Juifs*, the Messiah is envisioned returning to rule the world alongside the King of France, but the King of France for La Peyrère's work was someone with whom he was much more closely

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<sup>72</sup> Morrow, "Politics of Biblical Interpretation," 543-545; and William L. Portier, "Church Unity and National Traditions: The Challenge to the Modern Papacy, 1682-1870," in *The Papacy and the Church in the United States*, ed. Bernard Cooke, 25-54 (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 27-37.

<sup>73</sup> Portier, "Church Unity," 27-37. Gallicanism was an incredibly diverse phenomenon, and defies all attempts at homogenization. See Richard F. Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility: A Study in the Background of Vatican I* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005); Idem, "Bossuet and the Consensus of the Church," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 652-672; Idem, "The Consensus of the Church: Differing Classic Views," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 25-48; Portier, "Church Unity," 27-37; and Yves Congar, "Gallicanisme," in *Catholicisme IV*, ed. G. Jacquemet, 1731-1739 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1956), 1731-1739.

<sup>74</sup> Isaac La Peyrère, *Du Rappel des Juifs* (n.p., 1643), Bks 1-5; Quennehen, "L'auteur des *Préadamites*," 349 and 360; Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 378-379; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Schoeps, "Philosemitism," 141.

<sup>76</sup> Popkin observes that, "In the dedication [to *Relation de l'Islande*], which is undated, a text from Isaiah 55 is cited to the effect that there will be a universal king who will spread God's message. Next it is said that this King is Louis XIV, who with the help of the Prince of Condé, will commence the conquest of the world" (*Isaac La Peyrère*, 10).

associated, namely Louis II de Bourbon, the Prince of Condé.<sup>77</sup> La Peyrère's universal role for the King of France in his messianic speculation would later resurface during time of the colonial and imperialistic period of Napoleon.<sup>78</sup>

### *The Man Who Would Be King*

Richard Popkin and Susanna Åkerman appear to have uncovered a plot to overthrow Louis XIV, King of France. This plot involved Oliver Cromwell, Queen Christina of Sweden, and the Prince of Condé, all of whom were personal acquaintances of La Peyrère. The plot consisted in removing Louis XIV from the throne, replacing him with the Protestant Prince of Condé.<sup>79</sup> During a key portion of this time, immediately following Christina's abdication of the throne of Sweden and her conversion to Catholicism, La Peyrère lived next to Christina as Condé's secretary.<sup>80</sup>

These political designs of Condé, Cromwell and Christina appear to be central to La Peyrère's biblical criticism. Popkin initially did not think there was sufficient evidence that La Peyrère was intent on political action, despite La Peyrère's clear political motivations. La Peyrère never seemed intent on the specific politics of the day, nor did he seem to incorporate them clearly into his vision. With regard to La Peyrère's arguments concerning the role of the French King, however, Yirmiyahu Yovel points out that, "in La Peyrère's thinking, these were outlines for an immediate political action, not visions of a distant future."<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Popkin later concedes, "Thus what was being proposed in La Peyrère's first work was not a pipe dream but a program of political action."<sup>82</sup> Upon more careful inspection, like the work of both Popkin and his former student Åkerman, it becomes clear that in *Du Rappel des Juifs*, La Peyrère saw the Prince of Condé as the King of France.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Nellen, "Growing Tension," 819; Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 377; Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 81; Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 202; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 3, 8 and 58-60.

<sup>78</sup> Starobinski-Safran, "Raison et conflits," 101-102; R.H. Popkin, "Millenarianism and Nationalism—A Case Study: Isaac La Peyrère," in *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture Volume IV: Continental Millenarians: Protestants, Catholics, Heretics*, ed. John Christian Laursen and Richard H. Popkin, 74-84 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2001), 77-78, 81-82 and 84 n. 32; Idem, "Afterward—Discovering the Abbé Grégoire," in *The Abbé Grégoire and His World*, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin and Richard H. Popkin, 183-186 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2000), 184; Idem, "Grégoire's American Involvements," in *Abbé Grégoire*, ed. Popkin and Popkin, 158-159; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 3; and Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 202.

<sup>79</sup> Quennehen, "L'auteur des Prédamites," 364 n. 81, 365-366 and 365 n. 88; Popkin, "Millenarianism and Nationalism," 78, 80 and 82; Idem, "The Religious Background of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy Volume I*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, 393-422 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 407; Idem, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 168; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 9, 40 and 180 n. 49; Idem, "Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac La Peyrère, II," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 18 (1984): 12-20; Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 11, 200, 202, 204, 213-215 and 219; Idem, "Queen Christina of Sweden and Messianic Thought," in *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, ed. David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel, 142-160 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 148; and David S. Katz, "Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Queen Christina of Sweden," *Jewish Social Studies* 45, no. 1 (1983): 57-72.

<sup>80</sup> Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 32 and 186; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Popkin, "Millenarianism and Nationalism," 78. Indications exist that La Peyrère went to clandestine millenarian meetings, but it is precisely because the evidence was limited to such trivialities, and that he never apparently wrote or participated in other ways in the politics of his age, that Popkin initially thought his work was limited to hypothesis, prior to uncovering the plot to overthrow Louis XIV. See Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 9 and 179 n. 30.

<sup>83</sup> Idem, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 165; and Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 200 and 202-204.

The plot apparently grew intense from 1654-1655, the years in which Christina left her position of royalty of her own free accord and chose to enter the Catholic Church. During this time La Peyrère continued serving Condé on his diplomatic missions, and he took up residence in Belgium living adjacent to Christina. In their plan, Cromwell would invade France with his military, and land at Bordeaux (former home of La Peyrère), which was heavily Calvinist. From Bordeaux, Cromwell's troops would incite the Huguenots into violent rebellion against the King. With an additional support of troops, Christina would lead the attack on France from the north. Personal letters have been uncovered from one of the Prince's spies in London that discuss this plot.<sup>84</sup>

The Prince of Condé sought an alliance with Christina and used La Peyrère as an intermediary. He likewise used La Peyrère on clandestine errands to England, the precise reasons for which are still unclear. It appears that a "marriage alliance" was being constructed between the Prince of Condé and Christina. Condé's family had been historically Protestant, but had only recently converted to Catholicism. Colonel Jean Baptiste Stoupe, a Calvinist spy, played an important and yet not completely understood role in this plot. Stoupe served as a close advisor and spy for Cromwell, and later, after the plot failed, he served as a military assistant for Condé. Stoupe was also a Protestant minister and the head of the French Reformed Church in London. One of Stoupe's main roles in this plot was through his delivery of secret messages between Cromwell to Condé. The plan failed because neither Cromwell nor Condé were willing to make the first move. Through his spy Stoupe, Cromwell informed Condé that if the Prince first declared himself King of France Cromwell would then invade Bordeaux to help Condé take over the nation. The Prince responded, again using Stoupe to relay the message, that if Cromwell would first launch his invasion in the south of France, the Prince would then declare himself King. Since neither was willing to make the first move the coup was never set in motion. Condé and Louis XIV made peace and Condé eventually became one of the King's military chieftains.<sup>85</sup>

Christina of Sweden's role in this entire affair was not insignificant, especially considering the intellectual circles in which she was involved. Reviewing the complex contours of Christina's life in their historical, political and social context, Åkerman maintains:

Thus, these activities amount to nothing less than a consistently pursued theologico-political conspiracy, which involved among other things, starting a Protestant revolution in France, putting

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<sup>84</sup> Popkin, "Millenarianism and Nationalism," 78 and 80; Idem, "Introduction: Warts and All, Part 2," in *Everything Connects: In Conference with Richard H. Popkin: Essays in His Honor*, ed. James E. Force and David S. Katz, xi-lxxvi (Leiden: Brill, 1999), xxx; Idem, "The First Published Reaction to Spinoza's *Tractatus*: Col. J.B. Stoupe, the Condé Circle, and the Rev. Jean Lebrun," in *The Spinozistic Heresy: The Debate on the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, 1670-1677*, ed. Paolo Christofolini, 6-12 (Amsterdam and Maarssen: APA-Holland University Press, 1995), 6-12; Idem, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 165, 168 and 175 n. 26; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 12, 40 and 180 n. 49; and Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 11, 213-215 and 219.

<sup>85</sup> Morrow, "French Apocalyptic Messianism," 208-209; Quennehen, "L'auteur des *Préadamites*," 366; Popkin, "Millenarianism and Nationalism," 78 and 80; Idem, "Introduction," xxx; Idem, "First Published Reaction," 6-12; Idem, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 165, 168 and 175 n. 26; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 12, 40 and 180 n. 49; Idem, "Menasseh ben Israel," 12-20; Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 11, 213-215 and 219; and Katz, "Menasseh ben Israel's Mission," 57-72. Popkin writes that, "[Gilbert] Burnet spent quite a bit of time with Stoupe, who told him of his conversations with Cromwell in 1654-55. Letters of two of Cromwell's agents on the Continent, John Dury and John Pell, during this period, confirm various details in the scheming" ("Jewish-Christian Relations," 175 n. 26).

Condé on the throne, or when that failed, creating an alliance between Mazarin's family and Cromwell's, and establishing a throne for Christina in Catholic lands.<sup>86</sup>

La Peyrère's post as Condé's secretary and diplomat required him to embark on missions throughout Europe: to Spain, the Dutch Republic, Scandinavia and England, from 1644-1655.<sup>87</sup> And thus he was enveloped in Condé's and Christina's political happenings. As an instance of his affection for Christina, La Peyrère dedicated his *La Bataille de Lents* (1649) to her, which painted Condé as a courageous leader, and Christina as of woman of good character.<sup>88</sup> Also noteworthy is that La Peyrère dedicated his *Relation de l'Islande* to Condé, which was published in 1663, but had already been completed as a letter to Le Vayer in 1644.<sup>89</sup>

Popkin suggests that part of the inspiration for such a plot was likely the fact, known both by La Peyrère and Condé, that a rabbi in Constantinople had proclaimed that 1588 marked the year that some unnamed future King of France was born. Although no one from the French royal family was born then, there was an important figure in French politics, namely, Henry II de Bourbon, the first Prince of Condé, for whom La Peyrère and his family worked. Henry II de Bourbon was born in the precise year of the nativity of this rabbi's prophesied quasi-messianic French King. Henry II de Bourbon was the father of Louis II de Bourbon, the very Prince of Condé involved in the plot.<sup>90</sup>

Christina's connection with La Peyrère is a significant one. Her court had been a center of learning; Orientalist and Classical scholars came from all over Europe to see her collections of ancient documents from all over the globe. Significantly, La Peyrère acknowledged assistance on his book on Greenland from Gabriel Naudé, who had once been Christina's librarian. Naudé (1600-1653) studied Averroes at Padua and, after having spent a year as Christina's librarian, served as Cardinal Mazarin's librarian in Paris until 1651.<sup>91</sup> Through Christina and Naudé, La Peyrère likely had access to a wealth of ancient sources to use in his hermeneutical project.

#### *Political Conversion and Royal Transformations*

La Peyrère was arrested by 30 men in 1656, the year after he published *Prae-Adamitae* (and the year of its publication in English), the very year after the plot failed to put Condé on the French throne. La Peyrère was interrogated, informed that he must apologize to Pope Alexander VII, and was advised to convert to Catholicism.<sup>92</sup> La Peyrère followed through on the advice he was given. While still a prisoner in Belgium, he wrote his formal retraction of his views, and then, after he was freed from prison, he went to Rome to meet with Pope Alexander VII. His formal recantation was carefully written so as to appear to be an apology, and yet so as to not really

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<sup>86</sup> Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 219. On Christina's numerous other political machinations, see Ibid, 6-7, 11-15, 21-23 and 134.

<sup>87</sup> Popkin, "Millenarianism and Nationalism," 80.

<sup>88</sup> Isaac La Peyrère, *La Bataille de Lents* (Paris: Imprimerie du Louvre, 1649); Quennehen, "L'auteur des *Préadamites*," 365 n. 84; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 12 and 179 n. 36.

<sup>89</sup> Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 10.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 82 and 104-109; Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 179 n. 43; and Oddos, "Recherches," 49.

<sup>92</sup> Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 14.

contradict his views.<sup>93</sup> At the time, La Peyrère's conversion, so it was thought, would be the catalyst to numerous conversions throughout Europe, which did not in fact occur.<sup>94</sup>

After so much failure, La Peyrère presented himself before the Pope in Rome. Following this event, La Peyrère modified his messianic vision by placing Pope Alexander VII in the decisive role that previously La Peyrère had envisioned Condé playing as King of France (in his *Lettre à Philotime*), a role which La Peyrère re-contextualized in light of Alexander the Great.<sup>95</sup> This was an interesting political move, since Pope Alexander VII had a strong apocalyptic bent. In fact, some scholars think he chose his papal name in part because he saw himself as a new Alexander the Great. Alexander VII was certainly known as one of the greatest patrons of art and architecture, and he had a particular interest in antiquities and history related to his Tuscan home and heritage.<sup>96</sup> He was of course justly famous for his reconstructions of Rome.<sup>97</sup> Prior to becoming Pope Alexander VII, Cardinal Fabio Chigi had played a role at the peace treaties of Westphalia, as had Queen Christina, which put an end to the Thirty Years' War and the so-called European Wars of Religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the time, Chigi was suspected of being a crypto-Protestant, and upon becoming pope, he claimed he would be the final pope, and had hopes of bringing universal peace. Unsurprisingly, Pope Alexander VII was pleased with La Peyrère after his conversion and recantation, and offered to let him stay in Rome, which La Peyrère refused.<sup>98</sup> On the more clearly apocalyptic side of things, one of the first things he did as pope was to commission a Hebrew translation of St. Thomas Aquinas' works, although only one volume was ever actually produced. The project was intended for Jews who would eventually convert at the eschaton, which Alexander VII apparently thought he would witness. Thus, La Peyrère's role for him fit naturally with what were perceived to be his own predilections.

### *Conclusion: Lasting Effects*

La Peyrère's most famous work, *Prae-Adamitae*, was widely read in the Dutch Republic following his visit there in 1655, with five different editions published in 1656.<sup>99</sup> His work had

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 14-15.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 16 and 181 n. 60.

<sup>95</sup> Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 381; Popkin, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 165 and 167; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 14-16 and 181 n. 63; and Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 205.

<sup>96</sup> Alina A. Payne, "Architectural Criticism, Science, and Visual Eloquence: Teofilo Gallaccini in Seventeenth-Century Siena," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 2 (1999): 156; Tod A. Marder, "Bernini and Alexander VII: Criticism and Praise of the Pantheon in the Seventeenth Century," *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 4 (1989): 628-645; Ingrid D. Rowland, "Etruscan Inscriptions from a 1637 Autograph of Fabio Chigi," *American Journal of Archaeology* 93, no. 3 (1989): 423-428; and Richard Krautheimer, *The Rome of Alexander VII, 1655-1667* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>97</sup> Marder, "Bernini," 628.

<sup>98</sup> Popkin, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 167; Idem, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 17 and 181 n. 60; Åkerman, *Queen Christina*, 205; and Benvenuta Mac Curtain, "An Irish Agent of the Counter-Reformation, Dominic O'Daly," *Irish Historical Studies* 15, no. 60 (1967): 399 and 403.

<sup>99</sup> Nellen, "Growing Tension," 820 and 820 n. 52; Jorink, "Horrible and Blasphemous," 430 n. 6; Idem, "Reading the Book of Nature in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic," in *The Book of Nature in Early Modern and Modern History*, ed. Klaas van Berkel and Arjo Vanderjagt, 45-68 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 63-64; Quennehen, "L'auteur des *Préadamites*," 366; and Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 14-15. Eric Jorink explains the significance of La Peyrère's work in the Dutch Republic, in the context of the Dutch debates about Cartesianism and Copernicanism in "Horrible and Blasphemous," 429-550. He explains that, "the emergence of biblical criticism in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic was a result of many influences. Philosophy, in this case Cartesianism, was just one factor.

an enormous effect on others, affecting entire disciplines like anthropology and geography.<sup>100</sup> La Peyrère seems never to have given up on his pre-Adamite hypothesis despite recanting. Perhaps that is why he went to live with the Oratorians, in order to use their library and continue to search for evidence in support of his theories.<sup>101</sup> His system of theology was partially a response to the Thirty Years' War and, as with his contemporaries, Hobbes and Spinoza, La Peyrère's hermeneutical program can be read as an attempt to bring peace.<sup>102</sup> The Thirty Years' War and the sixteenth and seventeenth century wars of religion in general loomed large in the seventeenth century quest for a biblical interpretation to end all wars.<sup>103</sup> La Peyrère's work in biblical exegesis was known to Spinoza, and became very important to Richard Simon, even where Simon disagreed strongly with his friend. Eighteenth century biblical scholars like Jean Astruc

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There was also a rather disturbing tendency, from the orthodox viewpoint, *within* the group of intellectuals engaged in biblical scholarship, which included not only theologians but also philologists. These scholars were working in the tradition of humanism, and the object of their scholarship ranged from linguistics to chronology, and from ancient geography to biblical zoology" (432). The reception of La Peyrère's work in the Dutch Republic must be read in this broader context.

<sup>100</sup> Livingstone, "Politics, Culture, and Human Origins," 180; Idem, "Preadamites," 41-66; William Poole, "Francis Lodwick's Creation: Theology and Natural Philosophy in the Early Royal Society," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 2 (2005): 245-263; and Gliozzi, *Adamo*, 535-566. For the differing receptions of La Peyrère's work among his contemporaries and through the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in the context of anthropology, see Rhodri Lewis, "William Petty's Anthropology: Religion, Colonialism, and the Problem of Human Diversity," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (2011): 277-279; Livingstone, "Politics, Culture, and Human Origins," 180-185; Idem, "Cultural Politics," 208-209; and William G. McLoughlin and Walter H. Conser, Jr., "'The First Man Was Red'—Cherokee Responses to the Debate over Indian Origins, 1760-1860," *American Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1989): 249. In the context of the nineteenth century, Livingstone explains that, "What readers in particular settings thought about whether La Peyrère should be vilified or valorized, about the proper governance of republics or the relations between the races, about whether polygenism saved or subverted the Hebrew Scriptures—all had a bearing on how reported findings of anthropological science were locally put to work" ("Politics, Culture, and Human Origins," 188). This is significant, Livingstone claims, because, "How scientific claims about human origins were made mobile during the nineteenth century was critically bound up with two intimately intertwined sets of historical geographies: the geographies of reputation and the geographies of reading. The circulation of Isaac La Peyrère's polygenetic account of human beginnings discloses this association. For how his reputation was staged had a critical bearing on how his theological anthropology was read. At the same time the value of his achievements was no less conditioned by how readers understood the cultural setting within which they themselves were located" (Ibid, 197).

<sup>101</sup> Wetsel, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 381; Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 16, 18-19 and 180 n. 46; and McKee, "Isaac de La Peyrère," 459.

<sup>102</sup> Morrow, "Bible in Captivity," 298-299; and Popkin, "Millenarianism and Nationalism," 78. On La Peyrère's theology and his impact on emerging biblical criticism, see especially Morrow, "French Apocalyptic Messianism," 203-213; Gibert, *L'invention critique*, 85-88 and 112-113; Jorink, "Horrible and Blasphemous," 431; Räisänen, *Marcion*, 137-152; Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 42-59; Idem, "Bible Criticism," 339-360; and Idem, "Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac La Peyrère," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 8 (1974): 59-63. Räisänen's essay entitled, "The Bible and the Traditions of the Nations: Isaac La Peyrère as a Precursor of Biblical Criticism" (*Marcion*, 137-152) and Grafton's essay entitled, "Isaac La Peyrère and the Old Testament" (*Defenders of the Text*, 204-213) are especially important and yet very neglected in the scholarly literature.

<sup>103</sup> This is especially clear in the work of Hobbes (see Morrow, "Leviathan and the Swallowing of Scripture," 33-54; and Idem, "Bible in Captivity," 298-299), Spinoza (Idem, "Early Modern Political Context," 10-11 and 20-23; and Idem, "Bible in Captivity," 298-299) and Lodewijk Meyer (Travis L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible* [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 21; and Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 95). The work of William Cavanaugh has been especially important in calling into question the designation of such sixteenth and seventeenth century wars like the Thirty Years' War as "religious." See William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 123-180; and Idem, "'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11, no. 4 (1995): 397-420.

still found themselves responding to what they saw as La Peyrère's corrosive biblical interpretation, and later nineteenth century historical critics like Wellhausen looked back to La Peyrère as a pioneer in modern biblical scholarship. Thus, although hardly known today, La Peyrère's work helped set the course that modern biblical criticism would travel for over three centuries.<sup>104</sup>

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